

(b) if so, by what time such a control room is likely to be set up;

(c) whether the control room will have direct link with the various State capitals only; and

(d) if so, how the incidents of atrocities on Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes which may take place in rural areas would be monitored effectively?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE
(SRI SITARAM KESRI) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The modalities are being worked out.

THREAT OF ENVIRONMENT POLLUTION

103. SHRI PRAKASH V. PATIL : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the threat of environmental pollution is constantly getting more and more acute due to felling of trees;

(b) the extent of forest cover being depleted for the purpose of fuel each year; and

(c) if so, the corrective action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH) : (a) Trees play a vital role in purification of air by absorbing carbon dioxide and release of oxygen. Felling of trees, therefore, affects the environment adversely.

(b) Since tops and bottoms of trees are utilized as fuelwood, there is no precise estimate of the forest cover being depleted each year on this account.

(c) Following measures have been taken to check depletion of forest cover :

(i) guidelines have been issued to State Governments/U.Ts. banning green felling on mountains/hills above 1000 metres;

(ii) assistance is provided to State/U.Ts. for development of infrastructure for protection of forests from biotic interference;

(iii) enactment of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 to check diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes;

(iv) various programmes of afforestation under State Plans and Centrally Sponsored Schemes including plantations under the 20-Point programmes are carried out.

BAN ON FELLING OF TREES

104. SHRI PRAKASH V. PATIL : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government propose to ban felling of trees for Railway Sleepers; and

(b) if so, the step being taken to meet the demand of Railways in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH) : (a) Government propose to phase out use of wooden railway sleepers and consequently, the intake of sleepers has come down from 30 lakh track sleepers in 1984-85 to 2 lakh sleepers in 1990-91.

(b) The Government has already made sufficient provision for replacement of wooden track sleepers with concrete sleepers.

POLLUTION FREE RIVERS

105. SHRI ASHOK ANANDRAO DESHMUKH : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of rivers included in the programme for making them pollution free besides the Ganga and Yamuna;

(b) whether the Government propose to include Betwa, Godawari, Narmada, Krishna and Kaveri rivers under this programme;

(c) if so, the time by which the work is likely to start on this programme; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?